Great Britain Parliament

A

LETTER,

Concerning the *Report* from the Committee of Secrecy, addreſſed to the returning Officers of Members to ſerve in Parliament.

Gentlemen,

THE honourable the houſe of Commons, by Publiſhing the Report from the Secret Committee, with circumſtances altogether unuſual and ſurprizing, have thereby appealed to the World, and particularly to you, for an approbation of their conduct. Their conduct therefore is at your diſcretion. And that you may not give judgment without hearing both ſides, I have taken the liberty to preſent you with a few plain, and I think not unnatural, Obſervations upon the ſeaſonableneſs, ingenuity, moderation, and juſtice of that performance. As you are Engliſhmen, and I hope good Churchmen, I need ſay nothing to perſwade you to judge as becomes true lovers of the Church of England and of our ancient conſtitution.

You will conſider to what a pitch the noiſe of this Report had wound up the expectations of all men; that the Councels, by which it hath been carryed on, have already had their effect ſo far as to produce very extraordinary meaſures, and a more compleat revolution in employments than I think ever happened in this Kingdom upon any other occaſion. You will obſerve that the Committee have had all the time and opportunities to be deſired to prove their charge; that they have been theſe many Months in poſſeſſion of the perſons, cabinets, letters and papers, of all thoſe from whom they could expect any information; that what they chiefly undertook to prove was a treaſonable attempt to introduce Popery and the Pretender; and upon the whole I hope you will make this juſt remark, that they have left their charge unproved, and that notwithſtanding the violent and unprecedented manner wherewith they have proceeded, they yet have diſcovered little more than what hath been the common table-talk, the chat of Coffee-houſes, and jeſt of men of underſtanding, for theſe ſix Months paſt.

I remember when this matter was firſt bellowed about, I heard the moderate men of the party declare, that if the Secret Committee ſhould not fairly prove that there was a project ſet on Foot by the Queen's Miniſtry to over-turn the ſucceſſion in the illuſtrious houſe, they would renounce their Whig-leaders, as a worſe ſort of men even than the perſons accuſed. Whether thoſe Gentlemen only declared this, or whether they will prove as good as their word, I cannot ſay; but I believe there is not a man of common ſenſe, who hath read or heard the Report, but is convinc'd it is rather a heap of rubbiſh raked together to puzzle and blunt our enquiry, than any fund of Treaſon or even of Miſdemeanours whereupon to ground a rational proſecution. One Advantage indeed I think this Report may be of to the Publick, which is to let us ſee that 21 of their wiſeſt heads, by an indefatigable labour and ſearch for many months, are able to compoſe a volumnious tract ſtuft with arbitrary aſſertions, facts miſrepreſented, with abſurdities, and forced and wreſted interpretations; all which directly o-

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verthrow every tittle they have advanced: Because when they are forced to use these little arts, it is a plain confession that they are not able to bring forth those astonishing Treasons with which they have alarmed us so long

The facts in this enormous composition, which are true, we knew long before, those which are false we will not believe, even upon the authority of the Secret Committee; and the inferences drawn from those facts are all of them so malicious, shallow and unfair, that we think they carry their own confutation along with them.

That this is exactly the case will appear, I presume, from a few reflections neither strained nor unnatural, nor yet so tedious as to take up as many hours as there were months employed upon the Report.

But before I enter upon the thing itself, I must take leave to make one obvious reflection upon the laudable design of it, which can never be supposed to be for the interest of the King; on the contrary, nothing can shake his establishment so much; for what can we think, when we see men highly in his Majesty's favour, countenanced, suported, and employ'd by him in places of the greatest trust, acting against the universal bent of the Nation, inflaming the whole Kingdom, straining the laws, and setting up a new Inquisition to shed the blood of those Ministers, who in obedience to the Queen entered upon a treaty of Peace, and by concluding the same, saved the nation an infinite deal of blood and treasure? I say what can we think of these men, but that they act by direction and command, or else that they act without any regard whatsoever to the King.

I am inclined to believe the latter; for provided any thing makes for their cause, provided it answers the wishes, indulges the spleen, gratifies the ambition, feeds the covetousness of any one or more of the party, it is enough, no more is demanded. Party gives the sanction, and the King is thrown wholly out of the question. This I believe to be the truth, but there are not wanting those who impute the present measures to another cause, for which perhaps there is but too much colour, although I think we had better pass it over in silence than endeavour to refute it. What opinion they themselves have of their own proceedings may be collected from a Letter wrote by Mr. Wal---le to Lord Sund--nd which his lordship dropt at the Bath, and is hereunto annexed.

The treatise which is the subject of our Letter is intitled The Report from the Secret Committee, &c. which with great submission might be much more properly called —— A Dutch or German libel against the late Queen, against two several Parliaments, against the Heads of the Church-party, and against the whole british nation.

There are no less than four folio pages, fifty, fifty one, fifty two, fifty three, beside several paragraphs dispersed up and down, to prove the Queen did not speak one word of truth; the addresses and votes of the two Parliaments, who thanked the Queen for the Peace, stand for nothing. The approbation which the whole british nation expressed of the Peace is villified, our honour every where given up, and all according to the old Whig-scheme, under the notion of concern for the persons libelled. P. twelve, The Advantages which were to accrue to England in particular are civilly term'd Bribes, as if whatever should be done for our interest was a national bribe. P. twenty four, the Committee-men are highly incensed at my Lord Strafford for thinking it an indignity to Great Britain to stand in need of the protection of a German Elector in the life time of Queen Anne. The March of the English Troops towards Ghent, where they had a garrison, and when the Dutch refused to let them stay in their territories, it represented as a grievous invasion upon our good friends and faithful allies, P. twenty seven

In short, the great stress of the whole accusation lies here, that we brought the Dutch into difficulties which they have got clear of, that by our taking care of our selves they were forced to make terms with the French King, for which they made him as fulsome a compliment as they have done lately to K. G. and

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that we who were principals in the war, did not think fit to be only seconds in a treaty of peace, as we were at Gertruydenburg? If these be faults let the nation judge, as also whether those men who report them as faults deserve the honour of being called an English Committee, howsoever they be dignified with the title of Committee of Secrecy.

We are told P. 1. what this report relates to, to wit, 1st. The negociations of Peace. 2dly, The Demolition of Dunkirk. 3dly, The Asiento contract. 4th, The Catalans. and 5th, The Pretender. The second and third Articles are dropt untill we have another opportunity; so we have only the Peace, the Catalans, and the Pretender to deal with at present, tho' by the bulk of the Report, and the time spent therein, one might have expected to have seen all this Artillery and Power marshalled together at once.

The Committee was in hopes in so volumnious an enquiry to trace out, &c. (saith the Report) but to their surprize they find a want of Books Papers, &c. This, I must own, is a modest and timely apology for their not proving what they have so loudly promised, and yet if they find a want after this volumnious enquiry. I am afraid they will find a want to the end of their days. With some difficulty I guss the meaning of this sentence to be, That after these gentlemen had tumbled over Volumes of Letters, Books and Papers, they have not found, what they wanted: that is to say, they have not found the Treason they promised to discover, and herein they and all mankind do agree. For once we will take their word, with this addition, that it had been happy for the King and King-dom if they had never touched Book or Papers in their lives.

The Committee men proceed to tell you of propositions of Peace sent from France to England, which the Queen by the Lord Raby immediately communicated to the States. This happened April 1711, and the Report saith that from this time the States heard no more of the negotiations until five Months after. The reason of which silence may be deduced from the difficulties the Queen had to bring the French to explain. For their first propositions being too general and unsatisfactory, she insisted even at the desire of the Dutch upon such as should be more clear and distinct, before she would so much as consent to a treaty. This necessarily occasioned several messages back and forward, and took up much time, but as soon as that affair was settled, she acquainted the Dutch therewith, as likewise with the Reasons of that interruption of correspondence, which the Committee have distinguish'd by several hard and invidious epithets. All which appears so clear from the Q's instructions to my L. Raby, that its equally amazing that the Committee did not conceal those instructions as well as those he had for the army, and a thousand other things which set forth their fallacious way of reasoning and representing, and that they should object that as a fault, which they themselves have fully excused and accounted for in Appendix no 10, where those instructions are inserted.

I own, beside the preliminary articles which the Queen communicated to the Dutch, she likewise in these five Month, exacted from the French some Specifick Articles in favour of England, nor was this contrary to the Grand Alliance, because those articles were (as the Committe allow) only eventual and conditional and to be of force in case a general Treaty should succeed.

It is a fundamental error that runs through the greatest part of the Report, that the English Ministers signed and finally concluded a separate treaty with France before they acquainted the Dutch with it. Whereas all that was concluded were only some certain Articles as a foundation for a general treaty, which Articles might afterwards have been changed, or might not subsist in Case the general treaty should prove ineffectual. Into this mistake the Reporters fall more than once, and hence take occasion at every turn to bestow, according to their way, the most injurious reflections upon the Queen and her Ministers.

For my part, I cannot easily comprehend what sort of Ministers they would have been pleased to allow her. One while they censure my Lord Strafford

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for professing himself ready to pay a punctual obedience to her Commands, and in another place condemn the Duke of Ormonde for transgressing her orders: Which particular is the more unjust in them, because he actually had her orders signified by her Secretary for what he did.

It would be an endless task to follow the reporters through their several Accounts of meetings, transactions, and minutes trivial circumstances; and to answer the sad outcries they make for want of Letters and Papers. In the name of God what would the men be at? To what intent or purpose is all this disposition and volumnious enquiry? The Queen passionately longed for a Peace, the nation was undone by the war, after many difficulties, inumerable obstructions, the peace was concluded. The pious Queen thanked God Almighty, the nation thanked her for it, and like it still so well, that they hope all those, who delight in war may be disappointed, and that their devises may be confounded. And now the Secret Committe are most exceedingly dissatisfied that they cannot find a circumstantial detail of every step, word, nod, wink or thought of those, who negotiated this matter.

In P. 4. It is said that my Lord Oxford, Duke of Shrewsbury, Lord Dartmouth, and Mr. St. John met Monsieur Mesnager at Mr. Prior's house, and what then? Mr. Mesnager had a Pass-port from the Queen to come over. And was every Man a traitor, Who met or conversed with him, when he had as much right to be in England as any Man in the Kingdom, any more then thousands of foreigners who now reside among us, poison the nation, and devour the fat of the Land.

There is a remarkable passage in P. 10. to this effect, That Mr. *Harley* being to go to Utrecht, carried with him instructions, the subject of which was not proper to be committed to writing. This comment is grouned upon an expression in the Secretary's letter to Mr. Torcy, That Mr. Harley will carry with him the Queen's final instructions; to which, because the Committee have not found or thought fit to find those instructions, they have fairly superseded their own reflection. Though why they have done so doth not appear, unless from their omnipotent power of concluding whatever they have a mind to suspect.

And in the next page, where speaking of a plan for a general peace given in by the French Plenipotentiaries, those all-knowing gentlemen of the Committee make this wise and refined stretch in politicks; But there is no room to doubt but this Plan, *&c.* was concerted here (in England) and sent by Mr. Harley to Utrecht.

So here the Committee pronounce, *ex Cathedra*, as a thing beyond all doubt what they could not, nay what they do not pretend to have the least proof of; and by the same rule might declare Utrecht to be the capital of England, and every Committee-man to be a man of sense and man of honour.

P. 12. It is said, Our ministry (at Utrecht) were by their instructions to act in concert with the allies, but they realy acted in concert with the French plenipotentiaries. This is home indeed, and if the bishop of London cannot acquit himself of this charge, we may be so happy to see a bishop of London sent to the Tower.

P. 13. The Committee is surprized to find the Ministry had gone such length without having any satisfaction concerning the monarchy of Spain. To say the truth, they have been so often surprized, and with so little reason, that for the future I shall not be surprized at any thing that they shall say. Well, are they satisfied at last, since satisfaction hath been had concerning that Monarchy? No, not in the least, it hath not been done just in their manner, and at their time; and therefore two Pages are spent upon shewing the invalidity of King Philip's renunciation, and that even Mr. Torcy said it was invalid in law and conscience. To which I reply, that Mr. Torcy's objections against it make the argument the stronger on the side of the ministry here; this, to do them justice, the Committee seem sensible of, and therefore would insinuate, that all his difficulties were only

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French trick and ſtratagem. Allow it, but I dare anſwer for it, at length it will be found, that the Duke of Orleans will take care to make that renunciation valid, and that for once our miniſtry have judged right.

P. 14 and 15. How ſenſeleſs is the reaſoning of the Committe? could there have been a more powerful inducement to us to preſs the renuncia ion, than the conſeſt backwardneſs of the French to come into it, and the various artificies they uſed to evade it? is it a way of reaſoning for an Engliſh Committe to affect, that we ſhold not look upon a thing to be an advantage to England, or inſiſt upon it as ſuch, purely becauſe a French miniſter told us it was not for our advantage? Although this ſort of complaiſance hath been ſhew'd more then once towards our good friends the Dutch; and although in the firſt Barrier Treaty, our honeſt miniſter though fit to ſacrifice his Queen and Country, and act in direct oppoſition to his Soveraign's commands, out of his defence to the judgment of thoſe with whom he was to treat, yet the example was not thought now very proper to be followed; and therefore I ſuppoſe the late miniſters are the leſs to be forgiven.

The greater part of the Report from page 17 to p. 29, is employed upon the Duke of Ormond, and here the Committee ſeem to excel themſelves in the two great points wherein they excel or others, Rancour and Dulneſs.

Your Committee, ſay they, conceive theſe (the Duke's) inſtructions ſign'd by her Majeſty to be the rule of his Grace's actions, till countermanded or revok'd by equal authority, &c. Extreamly right; and thoſe inſtructions were countermanded by equal authority: That is to ſay, by an order from the Crown ſignified by a Secretary of State; and an order ſo ſignified hath always been reputed equivalent to the immediate order of the Crown, in all caſes of War, and treaties of Peace. Had the learned Committee known what paſſed in Queen Elizabeth's time, and what Sir Francis Walſingham wrote upon this point to prove a ſignification of the Queen's order from the Secretary to be as valid as an order under her own Hand, they would not have ſtarted this objection. Ask my Lord Duke of Marlborough what other orders or inſtructions had he for ſome Years in the late War. Ask my Lord Portmort and the Governor of the Garriſons and Plantations abroad the ſame queſtion.

The Committee hint at the Duke of Ormond's writing a private and a publik Letter, as they call it, at the ſame time, which is truth; but to make this a fault, they ſhould have convinced us, that it is not the conſtant practice in all affairs of moment for miniſters to do the ſame; upon theſe occaſions whoever write to the Government, ſend two Letters at the ſame time; one to be copied by the Clerks for the view of all the People, and is called the Office Letter, the other only to be ſhewn to the Soveraign.

Was the Duke therefore, in his Office Letter, to own or take notice of the receipt of thoſe inſtructions for not fighting, which the Queen commanded him to keep with the utmoſt ſecreſie? That the Committee could not be ſo ſtupid to be ignorant of; at leaſt I am willing to think ſo well of their underſtanding; ſo that they only mentioned it, as they do many other things in purſuance of the old maxim, Lay on a great deal and ſome will ſtick.

The Correſpondence (between the Duke and Mareſchal Villars) ſay they, is founded upon a Poſtſcript in Mr St. John's *Letter*. Partly true, and I would fain know which of them would refuſe a Legacy founded only upon a codicil or poſtſcript to Mr. St. John's Will. But beſide this poſtſcript the Duke of Ormond as General, had a power to correſpond with Villars, as well as the Duke of Marlborough to correſpond with the Duke of Bavaria, ſuch a power is includen in the nature of a General's command, and hath been freely executed by all Generals.

Moreover, by an Act made the 7th of Queen Ann, the General hath a power to grant his licence no any of his Army to correſpond with an Enemy, and much more therefore hath he a power to do it himſelf. The Act is made to prevent mutiny and deſertion, and manifeſtly veſts the General with this privi-

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lege; and without this privilege the greatest inconveniencies might probably happen.

P. 21. It is insinuated that his Grace exceeded his orders by remaining unactive after he found the French Court not sign'd, as it should have been, for the delivery of Dunkirk, but it must be observ'd *that* now the confederate Army were besieging Quesnoy, so that *nothing* else was to be attempted. And it is likewise undeniably true, *that the* Duke covered *the* Siege, otherwise Prince Eugene would have been forced to have dislodged.

But it is in vain to answer every objection of the *Committee*, who in 63 pages close printed in folio, *have* not been able to produce any one criminal fact of consequence; but are forc'd to toil, and sweat, and labour to pick up a number of *little* facts, and to set *them* off *with* abundance of *their* trash and garniture.

I shall pass over the business of Tournay, and *that* of *the* Catalans, till I shall have more leisure, when I design to examine the whole Report. For L. Bolingbroke is *not here to* answer for himself, so in those particulars the *Committee* may flourish, as having a clear stage for a while, only I must observe, *that* allowing *what they* do say of *these* Affairs, all *doth not amount to Treason*.

I am come to see *what they have* to urge *about the Pretender*, and *what they* do urge is such poor stuff, such *wretched* trifling, *that* I am credibly informed, even *the* Chairman was out of countenance as he read it; *that we* should be alarmed for the Lord knows *how* long *with what Treasonable* designs were discovered; *that* we should be told daily *that* ample proofs were procured of plots *to* bring in the Pretender; and now *at* last *that the Committee* should refuge themselves in the mean plea of *the* want of Papers would to any other Parliament, but the present, appear a greater *than all which the Committe have* undertaken to prove.

P. 52. The *Committee* having observed, *at the* beginning of *this* Report, that several *Letters*, and papers are wanting, *&c.* it is not to be expected——but what——but *that* others are wanting too. Now might we not *with* equal justice say, *that the Committee have* made away with these very *Letters* they pretend to want, on purpose to screen themselves under *that* cover? However they have observed several passages which are a plain vindication of a tenderness towards the Pretender and his cause. These Passages relate to his removal out of France into Lorrain, which it is said was the project of our ministry; and for any *thing that* yet appears, he doth as little harm in that Asylum as he could do in any other part of the World.

I know not which it raises most, mirth or indignation to see the *Committee* inveigh against what they call expressions of tenderness for the Pretender. Against expressions *which* are no further tender then as they are not in the Billingsgate strain. I suppose *they* would *have had* the Secretary, in a paper of state to *have* us'd the foul language of the *Author* of the Flying-post, or a Member of the *Kit cat Club*; and all to recommend *his* zeal for the Illustrious House.

That which is quoted out of *the* Pretender's Declaration, I believe *will* be allowed in no Court of Judicature in England as good evidence, unless he should come *himself* to prove it.

I have but one observation more to make *at this time*, and *that* is to take notice *that the Committee* labour *throughout the whole* performance to prove that *the late* ministry were not quite so open in *their* intrigues as became good Christians; which point I readily give up; *neither was there* ever, that I know of an honest ministry, strictly speaking, except the Present. By the nature of their Office, and corruption of Mankind, they are obliged to play a double game, and in short, to do a *thousand things which* Divines and Moralists condemn, but which always *have* been practised, and seem almost unavoidable. So *that whatever* reserves *the late* ministry *might have* used *with the* Allies, yet if *those* reserves *brought about the* main end *which* was a general Peace; if *they* were not contrary *to law*; if no bribery appears, no *treasonable plots*, where are *their* Crimes?

Politicians

Politicians, as such, are all of them double dealers, and therefore let him who is without fault throw the first stone.

That, Gentlemen, I have laid before you a short View of this sedious Report to which at present I have nothing to add, only to bewail the condition which the Country is now reduc'd to, The blood which these men thirst after, the vengeance they breath forth, the reasons of their proceedings, and the opinion they themselves have of them, cannot be better represented than in the Letter I before have mention ned, and which is verbatim as follows.

A LETTER drop'd at Bath, and sent to a Gentleman in London, directed to the E. of Sun---d.

My Lord,

I Have received your Lordship's of the thirtieth of April, the Contents of which are rather a concern to me, than a surprize. In the genr'al corruption, I had little reason to believe the neighbourhood where your Lordship is should escape untainted.

By this post you will have an account from Lord T--d of what has been done in these parts, with some particulars of the Oxford visit. The incles'd, my Lord, is a copy of the letter sent to Dr. Charlet; but it is not writing that will ever be able to reduce that University to a state of discipline and orde; other means are necessary.

I am now to tell your Lordship the Committee has finish'd their Report, and will lay it within a few days before the House, what the result will be I am yet doubtful, but we have now nothing for it but a bold push, and accordingly have determined to allow no time to the enemy to examin or consider the Report.

The impreachments will be for high treason and other crimes, &c. I wish we have not, in this resolution, strain'd the matter too far, not that I believe we are in any danger of not seeing your Lordships confirm whatever accusations we shall bring before you.

The people who think they have a right to look into our actions, know their strength, they know how far they have gone, and that they can secure themselves only by going farther.

If upon every drunken holiday the government is over-run with riots and seditious assemblies, what opposition may we not reasonably expect, when we are leading the favourites of the faction to the Scaffold?

If we fail in our attempts, we must be content to bear the yoak we have prepar'd for our enemies; if we should succeed, we shall never more be troubled with that spirit that has so long been grievous to us.

The Guards are all sent for to be in a readiness, but I am very doubtful how far they will come into what is necessary, should there be occasion for them, and must therefore entirely go along with those, who hold the necessity of raising some assistance from foreign Troops.

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My Lord *I shall say no more*. Jacta est alea, *and fortune within a few weeks will dispose of us one way or other. I am,*

My Lord,

With much truth,

Your Lordship's, &c.

R. W——le

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